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Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

COORDINATION QUESTIONS: REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION (item 5 (a))

1. At its 5th meeting, on 11 June 1997, the Committee considered the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for 1996 (E/1997/54 and Corr.1).

Discussion

2. The Committee welcomed the new improved format of the report, and commended the Secretariat for presenting the policy issues and information in a concise and focused manner. Some delegations found the report descriptive, and expressed the wish for more analytical reports in the future where ACC would identify difficulties faced in implementing different mandates.

3. Delegations expressed support for the future directions identified in the Secretary-General's foreword to the report:

(a) That ACC should be a policy- and action-oriented instrument geared towards launching and monitoring concrete joint initiatives to accomplish common policy objectives;

(b) That there was a need for the organizations of the United Nations system to show at this critical juncture, beyond their individual accomplishments and reform efforts, also a collective capacity - a capacity as a system - for renewed cost-effectiveness and for adaptation and change;

(c) That there was need for a new system-wide culture, which should be based on systematic policy consultations, effective decentralization, respect of organizations' mandates and competencies, and a common appreciation of the challenges ahead and of the respective strengths of the various organizations of the system in meeting them;

(d) That there was need for improved interaction between ACC and intergovernmental bodies.

4. Generally, members of the Committee recognized the efforts of ACC to strengthen coordination within the system, and to perform a more effective role in bringing greater cohesion within the system. They requested ACC to maximize those efforts and looked forward to receiving a report on the results. Members stressed the need for ACC to continue to develop and launch concrete policy objectives and make a critical contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system. Some delegations emphasized the need for ACC to provide information on progress made in achieving these objectives in the context of its future reports. Members also stressed the need for ACC to continue to play a leading role in the coordination of policy guidelines and activities of the organizations of the system.

5. Some delegations stressed the view that priority areas in the work of ACC needed to be addressed in accordance with the priorities established by the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly and the current medium-term plans of the organizations of the system.

6. Regarding the issue of African economic recovery and development, a number of delegations welcomed the recognition by ACC of the need for ownership of programmes under the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. A call was made for a clear indication of the added value of the Special Initiative at both the national and international levels. Members welcomed the recognition by ACC of the need to find an acceptable resolution of the debt problems of African countries. Some delegations expressed the view that linkages between the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa needed to be more clearly brought out and that resources should be identified for the implementation of the Special Initiative and the New Agenda.

7. On the issue of the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences, members welcomed the initiative taken by ACC to establish the ad hoc task forces. A question was raised as to whether the use of the ad hoc task forces had led to greater cost-effectiveness, and it was requested that a complete report on their work should be included in the next ACC annual overview report.

8. With regard to the ACC decision to establish an Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, one delegation, while welcoming the initiative for the advancement of women, emphasized that when ACC reviewed and acted on the recommendations of the Committee the proposed action should be in conformity with relevant provisions of the Charter.

9. A number of delegations expressed satisfaction with the continuing work of ACC in the area of assistance to countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter. They emphasized that the imposition of sanctions on some countries had had adverse effects on the economies of a number of neighbouring countries, and requested ACC to continue to keep that issue under review. Some delegations underscored the need to adopt appropriate measures for assisting countries that had been affected by the sanctions imposed in connection with the implementation of Security Council resolutions 661 (1990) of 6 August 1990 and 724 (1991) of 15 December 1991.

10. Some delegations expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by ACC, through its Consultative Committee on Programme and Operation Questions, in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120 of 20 December 1995 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/42 of 26 July 1996, in particular on the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, including the work related to the selection process and performance appraisal for resident coordinators, the promotion of training programmes and field coordination workshops.

11. On the subject of the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery, a number of delegations welcomed the measures adopted by ACC, and requested improved methods of work and streamlining of the inter-agency machinery to bring about greater effectiveness in promoting system-wide coordination. It was also noted that the co-location arrangements of the secretariats of the jointly-financed bodies in Geneva would result in cost-effectiveness and improved performance.

12. With respect to administrative questions, some delegations expressed the view that the current conditions of service of international staff were sufficiently competitive, and that ACC comments with respect to recruitment and retention difficulties had not been substantiated. They regretted the tendency by some members of the system to deviate and/or withdraw from the common system. Delegations noted the explanations given by the Secretariat in this regard. Other delegations expressed the view, however, that based on studies undertaken by the International Civil Service Commission, consideration should be given to accepting the recommendations of the Commission pertaining to the need to improve the conditions of service. One delegation went further and noted that the issue had been overtaken by events since the General Assembly, at its fifty-first session, had decided not to accept the Commission's recommendations regarding a salary increase for Professional staff.

13. Some delegations requested information on progress achieved among the organizations of the United Nations system in the use of the Integrated Management Information System for administrative operations and reporting. They noted the explanations of the Secretariat that initial consultations with heads of organizations had recently been started, and that further action would be pursued, on behalf of ACC, by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions.

14. With regard to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), a number of delegations reaffirmed the role and the usefulness of JIU, which had been established by the

General Assembly, expressed reservations on the recommendations of ACC with regard to JIU, and rejected a zero nominal budgetary growth for the 1998-1999 budget and that a study on the role and function of JIU should be undertaken. Other delegations stated, however, that the recommendations were entirely appropriate since the organizations of the United Nations system contributed to the budget of JIU on a cost-sharing basis, and thus had a right to ensure that JIU performed its tasks satisfactorily, in accordance with its mandate and at the lowest possible cost.

15. On the subject of the financial and budgetary situation of the United Nations, some delegations expressed serious concern about the continuing accumulation of arrears as a result of non-payment of contributions, and underlined the principle that all Member States should pay their assessments in full, in a timely manner and without conditions.

16. Members of the Committee welcomed the development, approval and implementation of common accounting standards, and the harmonization of formats of financial reporting among the organizations of the system and encouraged their widest implementation since they considered that this should assist ACC in its coordination work. One delegation asked whether ACC planned in the near future to address ways for harmonizing and strengthening internal oversight capabilities among member organizations of ACC. One delegation expressed concern at the non-implementation of cost accounting standards in the United Nations in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 51/225 of 3 April 1997, and requested ACC to report to CPC on the findings.

17. The Secretariat acknowledged the views expressed on the format and content of the report, and noted the comments and observations indicating that these would be transmitted to ACC members.

Conclusions

18. The Committee took note of the annual overview report of ACC, welcomed its new improved format, commended the Secretariat for a concise and well focused report, and requested that future reports be more analytical than descriptive.

19. The Committee urged that the orientations expressed by the Secretary-General in the foreword to the report on the role and functioning of ACC should guide the future activities of ACC.

20. The Committee agreed that ACC should continue to strengthen its role as a policy and action-oriented instrument geared to launching and monitoring concrete joint initiatives to accomplish common policy objectives, and make an effective contribution to the implementation of efforts for reform and strengthening of the system. The Committee stressed that ACC, in carrying out its primary task of strengthening coordination of activities of the United Nations system, should focus on the strategic objectives established in the Charter, the General Assembly, and the medium-term plans of the organizations of the system.

21. The Committee underscored the need for resource mobilization as a key element in ensuring the success of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. The Committee welcomed the efforts made to ensure government ownership of programmes under the Special Initiative at the country level. The Committee requested that the linkages between the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa and the Special Initiative be clearly brought out.

22. The Committee took note with appreciation of the efforts of ACC to promote a coordinated and integrated system-wide approach to the follow-up to major international conferences through ad hoc inter-agency task forces, and requested that the results of the comprehensive assessment of the work of the task forces to be carried out by ACC in 1997 should be included in the next annual overview report of ACC.

23. The Committee took note of the information provided on assistance to countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter, and indicated its support for measures for assisting countries that had been affected by the implementation of Security Council resolutions 661 (1990) and 724 (1991). The Committee requested ACC to keep the item on its agenda, and to include it in future reports.